Syndicate Bulletin 1/24/67

The Manchester Story

It Could Tell All.

By ART BUCHWALD

Washington—There has been so much controversy over the William Manchester book, "The Death of a President," that the only solution to the problem would be for Mrs. Manchester to commission someone to write the official version of what happened when her husband tried to write the book.

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In this way, history would be served and the principals in the drama would not have to talk to a lot of writers who are planning to do books on how Manchester wrote his book.

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The first thing to do would be to find a writer whom the Manchester family trusted. Since the writer would have access to very personal matters, as well as letters and documentation, he would have to agree in a signed contract to submit the manuscript to the Manchesters before it was published. The Manchester family or their representatives would have the right to delete anything that might prove embarrassing to the Manchesters, Harper and Row or Look magazine.

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It should be understood that anybody who undertakes the assignment will not profit by it and that all the money earned from the book will be turned over to the Middletown, Conn., public library. The author would keep magazine and newspaper rights and would have to pay all legal fees in case Manchester tries to stop him from publishing the book.

Furthermore, all the tapes and notes taken during the research of the book will be turned over to Mrs. Manchester and will not be made available to the public until her husband writes another history.

In exchange for making him the official historian of this publishing debacle, the Manchester family would speak to the writer at length and would tell him the most intimate details of what happened while the book was being written.

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Nothing would be held back from the writer that could contribute to history, and, since the final manuscript would be submitted to the Manchesters before publication, they need have no fear that something might appear in print that could embarrass them or be misinterpreted by the press or the public.

It would be assumed that the writer also would talk to the Kennedy family and ask them their version of what happened. But since the Manchesters commissioned the book, they would have the last say as to how these facts would be represented.

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The one fear of authorizing such a book is that it could show Sen. Robert Kennedy in a bad light, and the Manchester family would have to avoid this at all costs, particularly during an election year.

There is the danger that the pro-Manchester people might twist and turn events in such a way as to make the Kennedys look bad, but much of this material could be edited out of the final draft with the help of the writer and Mrs. Manchester's lawyers.

If this couldn't be worked out amicably, the Kennedy family could always commission someone to write their version of how Manchester wrote his book. It could keep Look magazine going for years.